



THE GINGERBREAD MAN.
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The baker awoke at 3 o'clock and soon afterward came downstairs yawning and rubbing his eyes in his accustomed manner. For it is a real hardship to arise in the middle of the night and go to work, and M. Jules sometimes regretted that he was such a skilful baker, for any other profession would have allowed him to sleep until daylight.

But the bread and rolls and gingerbread must be fresh and warm by breakfast time, or the people would be sadly disappointed, and the only possible way to get them ready was to start the work at 3 o'clock.

First, he lighted the big swinging lamps, which made the room bright as day, and then he built the fires in the great furnaces. Presently these last were roaring in a very businesslike manner, and as soon as he heard the roar M. Jules began to whistle. It was his custom, and kept him from getting lonesome while he worked.

Next he kneaded the bread, formed it into loaves, and placed them in long rows upon the slabs, ready for the oven. The rolls were then mixed and kneaded, and he longer time to get them ready than it had the bread, for they were small and quite faintly shaped.

But at last the important task was completed, and while they were rising and the ovens heating, Monsieur mixed his gingerbread and cakes.

Somehow, the work progressed very swiftly this morning, and after a time the baker found he had a good hour to spare before the ovens would be ready.

Then an idea struck him.

"Why, to-day is the Fourth of July," he thought, "and that is a national holiday. I think I will make a gingerbread man, such as I used to make in Paris, and put it in the shop window to attract attention. These Americans like enterprise, and they have never seen a gingerbread man, for I have not made one since I came to this country."

With M. Jules to think was to act, and he began to gather his material together for a great batch of gingerbread dough. For he resolved that the man he was about to make should be big enough and fine enough to arouse the wonder of all beholders.

He began by filling a great bowl with flour and then rubbed into the flour some butter and lard.

"That will make it short," said Monsieur, "although it is to be a tall man."

Then he added some molasses.

"He will be a sweet fellow," thought the baker, smiling at his own pleasantness.

Then he shook in the ginger and several fragrant spices, and began mixing the dough into one great mass.

"It is too stiff," reflected the baker, a few moments later. "My man must not be stiff; that would render him disagreeable."

He laughed at the whimsical thought, and, glancing around, saw the brown bowl that Madame had left sitting upon a corner of the table. It was nearly full of the precious liquid, and M. Jules, with his mind intent upon his work, never stopped to wonder how it came there.

Perhaps he thought he had himself unconsciously filled the bowl with water. Anyway, he dumped all the Essence of Vitality—the great Elixir which could never be duplicated in all the world—into the mass of dough he was preparing for his gingerbread man!

Monsieur merely noticed that the dough had now become the proper consistency, and mixed easily.

Whistling merrily, he presently spread the huge batch of dough upon the high table and began rolling it and working it into the shape he desired.

Ah, but is Jules Groganade a true artist, although a baker! Under his skilful hands the gingerbread man slowly but surely took form; and the form was fully as large as that of a well grown fourteen-year-old boy.

But it was by no means a boy that Monsieur was forming with such care; it was, rather, the figure of a typical French gentleman, such as may seldom be met with elsewhere than on the boulevards of Paris. It was interesting to watch the figure grow; interesting, of course, to M. Jules, as there was no one else in the bakery to see.

The man appeared to be dressed in excellent fashion. Monsieur made him a collar and shirt front of white bread dough, which looked very beautiful in contrast to the brown gingerbread dough of his clothes.

Then with a lump of dough, carefully kneaded, he formed the necktie, necktie, making a beautiful bow, indeed.

A waistcoat of fashionable cut was next added. The buttons on the man's coat were white lozenges, and to represent shoes the baker mixed his dough with licorice, until the shoes seemed as black and shiny as if freshly polished.

You would have loved to see, could you have been present, the delicate skill with which the baker carved the hands and fingers of his man, using a small but sharp knife and patting and rounding each finger into proper shape. He even clipped from a sheet of transparent celluloid the finger nails and pressed them carefully into the dough at the ends of the fingers. Who but Monsieur would ever have thought of such a thing?

But after all it was upon the face that the baker exercised his best skill. As a sculptor forms his models out of clay, so Monsieur pressed and squeezed and moulded his plant dough until every feature of the gingerbread man became wonderfully lifelike.

Of course, the face was made of the white dough, with just a trifle of the pink coloring mixed into it to make it resemble real flesh. But the wavy hair that surrounded the face was of gingerbread dough, as its brown color, after it had been baked, would be quite natural and lifelike.

Among the things brought from Paris by the Groganades was a pair of excellent glass eyes, and M. Jules rummaged in a drawer until he found them and then pressed them into the dough face. And now it positively seemed that the gingerbread man was looking at you, and the eyes lent its face a gentle and kindly expression.

"There's something lacking, however," murmured the baker, looking at his work critically. "Ah, I know—it's the teeth!"

Teeth, for a gingerbread man! But nothing was easier to represent, once their absence was noted. Between the lips of the man our baker pressed two rows of small white candies, and it was wonderful to remark the pleasant smile that now lent its charm to the face.

With a sigh of satisfaction in the result of his work, the baker at last declared his gingerbread man ready for the oven.

"And it is my masterpiece!" cried M. Jules proudly. "Never, even in Paris, have I seen so perfect a man of dough. He is well worthy to have a name, and I will call him John Dough, which will be appropriate indeed."

But the great ovens were now glowing brightly, so Monsieur filled them with bread

and rolls and watched them carefully until the big and little loaves were all done to a turn. The cakes and cookies came next, and by the time that dawn arrived the front shop was stocked with heaps of the warm, fresh smelling loaves and rolls, and trays of delicious cakes and buns hot from the ovens.

Then the baker came back to his gingerbread man, which he first placed gently upon a great iron slab, and then slid into the open door of a perfectly heated oven.

With great anxiety Monsieur watched the oven. The dough was perfectly mixed, the workmanship was most excellent. Would the baking turn out to be as perfect as the rest?

Much good dough may be spoiled in the baking. None knew that better than Jules Groganade.

So he tended the oven with nervous care and finally, at exactly the right moment, the baker threw open the oven door which drew out the sheet of iron upon which the grand gingerbread man rested.

Filled with pride and satisfaction, Monsieur bent admiringly over his great creation; and as he did so, the gingerbread man moved, bent his back, sat up and looked about him with his glass eyes, while a wondering expression crept over his face.

"Dear me!" said he, "isn't it very warm and close in this room?"

The Great Elixir had accomplished its purpose. The wonderful Essence of Vitality, prized for centuries and closely guarded, had lent its marvelous powers of energy and life to a gingerbread man! And all through the stupidity of a baker's wife who was color blind and could not distinguish a golden flask from a silver one!

M. Jules, who knew nothing of Arab's flasks or of the Great Elixir, glared wildly into the glass eyes of the gingerbread man. He was at first sure that his own eyes were deceived, and he played him a trick.

"John Dough, John Dough!" he cried, "Did you speak? Merciful heavens! Did you speak, John Dough?"

"I did," said the gingerbread man, struggling to rise from the slab, "and I declare that it is warm and close in this room!"

M. Jules gave a scream of terror. Then he turned and fled.

A moment later he staggered into the shop, tossed his head about his head and fell in a heap upon the floor, being overcome by a fainting spell.

Madame, who had just come downstairs and opened the shop, gazed upon her husband's terrified actions with an amazement that prevented her from moving a limb or uttering a sound.

What in the world could have happened to Jules?

She received the greatest shock of her life.

From out the door of the bakery came a gingerbread man, so fresh from the oven that the odor of hot gingerbread surrounded him like a cloud. He looked neither to right or left, but picked Monsieur's tall silk hat from off a peg and placed it carefully upon his own head.

Next he caught up a large candy cane from a showcase, stepped over the prostrate body of the baker and so, leaving the shop, closed the front door behind him.

Madame saw him passing the windows, stepping along briskly and swinging the cane in his left hand.

Then the good lady imitated her husband's example. She gave a shrill scream, threw up her hands and tumbled over unconscious.

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MRS. RUBBERINO HAS SUSPICIONS.

Why Should Her Husband Defend the Auto Woman, the Fashion Woman, the Appendicitis Woman and the Rest?

Mrs. Rubberino began to grind out her griet of news and opinion immediately after dinner the other evening, while her husband vainly endeavored to pick some sense out of the newspaper he was trying to read.

"Well, of all the silly and shoddy snobs in the world, those Lemmings people in the fourth floor front flat, in the other house, are the worst," said Mrs. Rubberino, ignoring the suggestive crackling of her husband's newspaper. "They got back to-day, and the way they did it around over their having been knocking about Europe for the last four months."

"Their baggage was all littered up with European labels, till you couldn't see for looking—I saw the stuff kicking around on the sidewalk. It's a wonder to me that they didn't have labels pasted on themselves when they came back. It would have been just like them, the upstarts!"

"And I don't believe one word of it that they've been to Europe at all, so I don't! They might bamboozle other folks with all those crazy looking labels on their baggage, but they can't fool me!"

"Europe? The idea! Didn't Lily Gitt next tell me that she saw their fox terrier running around the lanes of Great Neck? They were probably hiding some more of their little tricks in the place in Great Neck all summer long. It would be just like the Lemmings to do a thing like that."

"What's that you say? You met a man the other day who saw the Lemmings somewhere in the Tyrol last August? I don't believe any such thing, so there now! You know you just made that up to be contrary."

"The idea of your sitting there and saying such a thing! Well, if you don't make it up just to be contrary, then the man who told you must have had some purpose of his own in working off such a whopper on you. The Tyrol, indeed! They'd look fine gallivanting around the Tyrol, I don't think!"

"Well, of all things in this world, what do you suppose I heard, to-day? You know that tacky looking little faggle out blonde who lives off her first husband's back fat? Oh, don't sit there and try to tell me you don't know the one I mean—didn't I see you eyeing her when we met her in the hall only a couple of evenings ago as we were coming in?"

"Now, what in the name of all that's laughable do you suppose she does for a living, or pretends that she does for a living? Designs costumes for the fashion press?"

"Did you ever hear anything funnier in all your born days? Such a perfect frump and dowdy designing costumes for fashion papers! I'd give anything in this world to see one of her costume designs, 'deed I would!'"

"I don't believe she could design a Mother Hubbard for a Filipino girl, that I don't. And she's the most independent, stuck up little moocher you ever saw. Never has she said a word to anybody, but just bows to folks in that superior, patronizing, hands off way when she meets 'em in the hall."

"That's the kind of woman—those sneaky, slinky, quiet ones—that I wouldn't trust behind a ten cent piece turned edgewise, 'deed I wouldn't. And the very idea of her pretending to be a designer of swell costumes!"

"What's that? You say it isn't necessary for a woman to wear dead swell clothes herself in order to be a successful designer of costumes for other women? That's it, go ahead and defend her! You're always just crazy to defend everybody but me!"

"The least little thing I do or say you jump on me for and you're always attributing the meanest kind of motives to me, but just the minute some catty, washed out, sneaky creature of a courtier, just like this one, tells you just swell up like a booby in defending her."

"It's a mighty peculiar thing, anyhow, that you should defend that woman. There's something in it that I don't exactly understand. It seemed to me that there was a significant exchange of glances between you and that frump when we met her in the hall the other evening, now that I come to think of it, and here you are getting all purple in the face and trying to fool me."

"It may not mean anything but I don't know. Oh, of course, you can say that you never exchanged a word with the woman in your life, but I've heard you say things like that before, and you say a good many things besides your prayers."

"Well, at last that Nippit woman—you know that fat, dumpy thing that lives with her snooty of a husband in the ground floor flat, over the corner—she's coming out in an automobile ride, thank Heaven, she's been going out every single day, ever since she moved in here, swaddled up in an automobile coat and with enough auto veils blowing around her head to wrap up a bale of cotton, but never did I or anybody else around here see her actually riding in an automobile till to-day."

"That noody-nardy of a husband of hers pulled one of the things alongside the curb this afternoon just as I was coming in—oh, yes, it was a pretty nice looking sort of a machine, but, of course, it was just a rented one, and there she was in the hall, all tattered up in her ready made automobile things. I know the coat's ready made, because I saw one just like it for \$18.95 yesterday, and you'd think she was the only human being on top of the globe that had ever so much as sniffed the gasoline from an automobile, 'deed you would, to see the way she goes!"

"She was talking with a loud laughing woman whom I don't know in the hall as I came in, and telling her what a fine chauffeur her husband was. And how do you suppose she pronounced chauffeur? She pronounced it shoo-fer, may I never draw another breath if she didn't when anybody who's ever ridden over once in an automobile knows that shoo-fer is the right way to pronounce it."

"What? You say shoo-fer is right? There you go again, defending another of those creatures! Now, I wonder if you've been making eyes at that dumpy thing, too?"

"Must be something wrong when you take to defending her the way you do, you get just as ugly and disagreeable as you can possibly be every time I mention the names of those flashy and mysterious women that live around here, and I don't know what to make of it, shoo-fer! I'd like to know where you ever learned any French!"

"Shoo-fer's right, and I know it, and the next time you meet somebody that knows enough to come in out of the rain just you ask if it isn't shoo-fer and find out for yourself. And if you're going to keep right on talking up for those fat, little shaggy women."

"Oh, talking about bottles, you know that singular, overdone old dowdy of a widow who lives on the fifth floor back, Mrs. Vanjunk, she calls herself, trying to make people believe she's got a Knickerbocker strain in her, or that her husband has, which is the same thing? Well, she was taken out of her flat to a hospital to-day, and the doctor that came here to get her was cautious to give it out that she was going to have an operation performed for appendicitis, but what do you suppose the janitor's wife told me?"

"Why, when the janitor's wife went up to straighten out the flat after the quarrelsome old thing had been taken to the hospital, she found one whole closet just filled up to the top with bottles—beer and whiskey and gin and rum and wine and all kinds of bottles; just thousands of bottles, the janitor's wife told me, and she had to spend the whole afternoon picking them up and sending them down in the dumb waiter!"

"So it's pretty certain that Mrs. Vanjunk was taken to the hospital for something else than an operation for appendicitis. She had just a plain case of the jimjams, I verily believe, so I do, and I always thought she was a drinking woman, she acted so crazy sometimes, and her nose was mighty red and—"

"What's that you say? That my nose is red, too, and that therefore I must drink 'secret myself? How dare you? You know as well as I that the very slight redness of my nose—and nobody else ever notices it and makes mean comments on it but you—is due to deficient circulation, caused by the fact that I have to stick in this flat all the livelong time and never go anywhere except to the theatre two or three times a week."

"What's that? I'm too eager to accuse other people of doing things like drinking and carousing? Oh, so you're taking up for one of them, then, are you? How long have you been on chummy terms with that withered up old Vanjunk woman, I'd like to know?"

"Never saw her but once in your life, eh, and then she looked like a nice clean, honest, respectable person, with not a sign or symptom of drink on her, and you don't believe that she ever tasted liquor in her life and you think she really is going to be operated on for appendicitis just because she's going to the theatre?"

"Well, you're like all the rest of the men—just great, big, hulking, pig headed simpletons. That's all I've got to say. As if a woman would have millions upon millions of bottles in a closet and never drink anything that the bottles contained."

"Oh, by the way, you know that Reeling girl up on the sixth floor that's pounding that piano all the time and driving the folks on that floor crazy with her thumping? Well, you know, she's always telling everybody she knows that she has her tailor gowns made by Gougerinsky, the Fifth Avenue tailor who gets anything he pleases for every bit of work that he turns out."

"What do you suppose the janitor's wife told me this afternoon? She was cleaning up in the Reeling flat this morning while they were all out up there, and in sweeping up in the clothes closets she saw the tags sewed in those dresses of the Reeling girl that she brags so much about, and would you believe it, every single one of her dresses is ready made and she buys 'em all down on Fourteenth street."

"Greatest joke on that nonsensical uphilly creature I ever heard of in all my born days, and the very first time I meet her in the hall I'm going to drop some little hint about Fourteenth street just to see her wither and shrivel up, and if she—"

"Bless my soul and body, if the man isn't sound asleep and snoring in his chair! Oh, I'm going to sleep right now, while I'm talking to you. Oh, these inconsiderate, brutal men!"

Mrs. Vanjunk, she calls herself, trying to make people believe she's got a Knickerbocker strain in her, or that her husband has, which is the same thing? Well, she was taken out of her flat to a hospital to-day, and the doctor that came here to get her was cautious to give it out that she was going to have an operation performed for appendicitis, but what do you suppose the janitor's wife told me?"

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